Dream Deferred

What happens to a dream deferred?

Does it dry up
like a raisin in the sun?
Or fuse like a sore-
And then run?

Does it stink like rotten meat?
Or crust and sugar over-
lke a syrupy sweet?

Maybe it just sags
like a heavy load.

Or does it explode?

—Langston Hughes (1902-1967)

A raisin in the sun, the sun – the sun’s rays make the grape more sweet, more tough. Raisins last a long time and do not go bad. In the Bible, raisins are a sensuous source of strength: “Stay with me and I will feed you with apples: for I am sick of love.” (Song of Solomon 2:5)

Raisins speak of sustenance, restoration, the culmination of great joy; just as time must pass for the grape to dry into a more delicious fruit. Or fester like a sore – And then run?

A sore that fester – what a ghastly sight! This grim image imparts to the reader the lingering pain of a dream that waits to be realised, that waits to take place, that waits and waits, and then it runs. Yet in so sickening a sight, the notion of a ‘running sore’ indirectly implies life and opportunity. A sore that runs is a mess that heals and in the same vein, a dream deferred will not remain ignored, but will break forth in the life of a man.

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